Organic Data—National Agricultural Statistics Service

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The National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) conducts hundreds of surveys each year and prepares reports that cover virtually every facet of US agriculture—production and supplies of food and fiber, prices paid and received by farmers, farm labor and wages, and other aspects of the industry, see www.usda.gov/nass. In addition, NASS's 45 State Statistical Offices (see www.usda.gov/nass/sso-rpts.htm) publish data about many of the same topics for local audiences.

Census of Agriculture

Every 5 years, Congress requires NASS to conduct a Census of Agriculture. The Census of Agriculture is the most comprehensive source of data portraying US agriculture. It is the only source of uniform data on agricultural production and operator characteristics for each county, state, and the United States.

The 2007 Census of Agriculture covered land acreage and sales of organically produced products grown according to the National Organic Standards. Farming operations with organic production were asked total production acres, cropland harvested acres, acres used for pasture, and sales of organic commodities in three classes—crops, livestock, and livestock products (which include eggs and milk). Also reported were the acres being converted to future organic production.

The 2012 Census of Agriculture will screen for certified, exempt, and acres transitioning to certified organic production along with an overall value of sales for exempt and certified products. This is a reduction in the organic content compared to the 2007 Census of Agriculture. The screening and value of sales questions are sufficient for establishing a population for further data collection efforts such as follow-on surveys or collaborative projects in which NASS may collect more detailed information about organic producers.

Census Follow-on Surveys

As a follow-up to the 2007 Census, NASS conducted its first-ever, wide-scale survey of organic agriculture in the United States. The 2008 Organic Production Survey is the first census follow-on survey conducted to measure the organic industry. The survey looked at organic farming activities during 2008, including:

• Production of field crops, vegetables, fruits, tree nuts, berries, livestock, and poultry;

• Production practices such as pest management, cover crops, crop rotation, rotational grazing, conservation tillage, water management, and buffer zones;

• Production expenses;

• Marketing practices, including wholesale, retail and direct-to-consumer sales; and

• Value-added production and processing.
Targeted operations for the 2008 Organic Production Survey were farms that were certified organic, farms exempt from certification, and farms transitioning to organic production. The overall survey response rate for the 2008 Organic Production Survey was 87%. Final results from the Organic Production survey were published on February 3, 2010. Data were published at the national level and by State when applicable. The report is available at www.nass.usda.gov.

**Collaborative Organic Censuses - 2011 Certified Organic Production Survey**

NASS conducted the 2011 Certified Organic Production Survey in conjunction with USDA’s Risk Management Agency. The target population was all farms and ranches meeting the standards of the National Organic Program administrated by the USDA’s Agricultural Marketing Service. The survey was a complete enumeration of all known certified organic producers in 2011.

The 2011 Certified Organic Production Survey provides acreage, production, and sales data for a variety of certified organic crops and inventory and sales data for selected certified organic livestock commodities. In addition, data for land in farms, participation in federal farm programs, and marketing practices on certified organic farms are included.

Data from the 2011 Certified Organic Production Survey provide industry with a reliable source of public information to use to justify research projects and fund requests to benefit producers. Producers can make informed decisions about the future of their organic farming operations. The data will help shape future decisions regarding farm policy, funding allocations, and availability of goods and services.

**Other Organic Data: Agricultural Resource Management Survey (ARMS)**

There is an organic component in Phase II of the ARMS for cropping practices data and Phase III of the ARMS for cost and returns data utilized by the Economic Research Service. Targeted organic commodities by the ARMS surveys are: soybeans in 2007, apples in 2008, wheat in 2009, and dairy and corn in 2010.

**For More Information**

US Census reports, including organic results, are available on the NASS website, www.usda.gov/nass